

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9313  
SECDEF WASHDC  
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS  
USCINCEUR  
USNMR SHAPE  
CINCUSAREUR  
CINCUSNAVEUR  
CINCUSAFE

UNCLAS LONDON 00401

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: MPOL, UK, NATO  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION MOTION ON DEFENSE CUTS

SUMMARY. ON WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY THE CONSERVATIVE OP-  
POSITION CHALLENGES THE GOVERNMENT ON HEALEY'S AN-  
NOUNCED 300 MILLION POUND CUT IN DEFENSE SPENDING. ALL

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE DEFENSE DEBATE, IN PARTICULAR THE  
PROPOSAL FLOATED OVER THE WEEKEND BY ALAN LEE WILLIAMS,  
MP, (CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY'S  
DEFENSE GROUP) THAT THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AND THE ARMY  
BE MERGED, AND THE "MINI-REBELLION" BY A FEW LABOR  
BACKBENCHERS WHO WANT TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO DIS-  
CLOSE THE SPECIFICS OF THE WARNING GIVEN TO THE PRIME  
MINISTER BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF. END SUMMARY.

1. IT APPEARS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE OPPOSITION WILL  
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BE ABLE TO CARRY ITS MOTION TO REDUCE THE SALARY OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE -- THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF INVITING  
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO SHOW IT HAS NO CONFIDENCE IN A  
MINISTER, THIS TIME FRED MULLEY. IAN GILMOUR (SHADOW  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENSE) WILL LEAD THE OPPOSITION  
ATTACK AND WINSTON CHURCHILL WILL BE SUPPORTING GILMOUR  
BY MAKING HIS FIRST MAJOR SPEECH AS A FRONTBENCH SPOKES-

MAN ON DEFENSE. CHURCHILL'S REPUTATION AS AN AMBITIOUS, COCKSURE, GOLDEN-HAIRED BOY OF THE CONSERVATIVE RIGHT-WING -- WHOSE RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON INVOLVED EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS ON DEFENSE MATTERS -- WILL BE TESTED. ALTHOUGH HIS INTERVENTION IS LIKELY TO ASSURE COMMONS A PYROTECHNIC PERFORMANCE WHICH ATTACKS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF DEFENSE ISSUES, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS OPPORTUNITY IN FACT PROPELS HIM INTO THE RANKS OF THE HEAVYWEIGHTS.

2. THE WILLIAMS PROPOSAL TO MERGE THE RAF INTO THE ARMY IS UNLIKELY TO BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IT WILL OPEN DEBATE ON THE BROADER ISSUE OF TRYING TO PROTECT THE UK'S CONTRIBUTION AND COMMITMENT TO NATO FROM SUFFERING ANY FURTHER REDUCTIONS. LEFT-WINGERS WILL ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT FOR MAKING TOO SMALL A CUT AND LABOR MODERATES AND RIGHT-WINGERS WILL ARGUE THAT DEFENSE CUTS HAVE ALREADY GONE TOO FAR. WILLIAMS HAS SAID THAT HIS VOTE WOULD DEPEND ON THE KIND OF RESPONSE HE GETS FROM MULLEY CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF SAVING DEFENSE EXPENDITURES.

3. JOHN P. MACKINTOSH, LABOR MP FOR BERWICK AND EAST LOTHIAN, WROTE A LETTER TO THE TIMES, PUBLISHED ON 8 JANUARY, ARGUING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS AN OBLIGATION TO INFORM THE HOUSE IN DETAIL OF THE VIEWS OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF AND HE HAS SAID HE WILL NOT VOTE FOR THE GOVERNMENT UNLESS THIS IS DONE. ON THIS TACK, MACKINTOSH IS LIKELY TO CARRY WITH HIM REG PRENTICE

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(FORMER MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT WHO RECENTLY RESIGNED). PRENTICE STRONGLY OPPOSED THE DEFENSE CUTS ANNOUNCED IN HEALEY'S IMF LOAN ECONOMIC PACKAGE AND MADE THIS A POINT IN HIS RESIGNATION SPEECH.

4. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO SURVIVE THE VOTE ON WEDNESDAY -- RAGGED VOTING FROM THE MINOR PARTIES VIRTUALLY ASSURES THIS -- THE DIVISION COULD EASILY BE A CLOSE ONE. THE LIBERALS, THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS AND THE UNITED ULSTER UNIONISTS HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY WILL DECIDE HOW TO VOTE AFTER THEY HAVE HEARD THE GOVERNMENT'S CASE. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION ARE EXPECTED TO PUT MPS ON THREE-LINE WHIPS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
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**Concepts:** MILITARY EXPENDITURES, MILITARY BUDGET, ARMED FORCES, DEBATES, OPPOSITION PARTIES, REORGANIZATIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decaption Note:**  
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**TAGS:** MPOL, UK, NATO  
**To:** STATE DOD  
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